

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMCONSUL MONTREAL
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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PEBR, NATO, SSOD, CA
SUBJECT: CANADIAN REACTION TO TRUDEAU SSOD AND NATO
SUMMIT REMARKS

1. SUMMARY: CANADIAN REACTION TO TRUDEAU'S SPEECH TO
SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT (SSOD) IN NEW YORK ON
FRIDAY, MAY 26 AND HIS SUBSEQUENT REMARKS AT NATO SUMMIT
MEETING IN WASHINGTON HAVE BROUGHT MIXED REACTION IN
CANADA. PRESS EDITORIAL COMMENT IN GENERAL FOUND TRUDEAU'S
DISARMAMENT PROPOSAL "WORTHWHILE" BUT VIRTUALLY ALL COM-
MENTATORS ADMITTED CANADA COULD NOT INDULGE LUXURY OF
FOREGOING NUCLEAR WEAPONS FOR ITSELF IF IT WERE NOT
LIVING UNDER U.S. NUCLEAR UMBRELLA. IN PARLIAMENT,
OPPOSITION TRIED TO EMBARRASS GOVERNMENT BY POINTING UP
APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN SELECTED GOVERNMENT
UTTERANCES, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO NATO AND THE SOVIET
THREAT TO EUROPE. AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC THERE SEEMED
TO BE A LOW-LEVEL OF INTEREST IN BOTH MEETINGS. OVERALL,
CANADIANS APPEAR TO VIEW THEIR ROLE IN DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS
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AS NOT BEING OF GREAT RELEVANCE, BUT THIS DOES NOT PREVENT
A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF POSTURING. DESPITE TRUDEAU'S EMPHASIS
ON DISARMAMENT DURING THE NATO SUMMIT, CANADA ENDORSED
THE LONG TERM DEFENCE PROGRAM AND ON RETURN TO OTTAWA
TRUDEAU PUBLICLY REAFFIRMED HIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENTS
TO THE NATO GOAL OF THREE PERCENT INCREASE IN DEFENSE
SPENDING AND A 12 PERCENT INCREASE IN CAPITAL OUTLAYS FOR

DEFENSE. END SUMMARY.

2. PM TRUDEAU'S SPEECH TO THE SSOD IN NEW YORK MAY 26, HIS ONLY SPEECH IN THE UNITED NATIONS DURING TEN YEARS AS PM, WAS GIVEN EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN CANADIAN PRESS, AS WAS THE PM'S PARTICIPATION IN THE NATO SUMMIT MEETING IN WASHINGTON. MAJOR PRESS EDITORIALS WERE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT TRUDEAU'S UNILATERAL DECISION REGARDING NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN CANADA (GOC INTENDS TO REPLACE NUCLEAR-CAPABLE VOODOO INTERCEPTORS WITH MORE MODERN - BUT CONVENTIONALLY ARMED-AIRCRAFT) WAS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE CANADA FELT SECURE UNDER THE U.S. NUCLEAR UMBRELLA. TORONTO STAR NOTED "IT'S EASY TO GIVE UP THE NUCLEAR-TIPPED ROCKETS ABOARD OUR PLANES WHEN WE KNOW THAT IN CASE OF IMMINENT DANGER, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE U.S. AIRCRAFT ARMED WITH SUCH MISSILES ON BASES TEN MINUTES' FLIGHT AWAY."

3. OTTAWA CITIZEN OF MAY 30 TOOK SIMILAR APPROACH POINTING OUT CANADA WOULD FACE GRAVE PERIL IN FOLLOWING TRUDEAU'S POLICY REGARDING NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN CANADA IF IT DID NOT HAVE A U.S. NUCLEAR STRENGTH TO RELY ON. "INDEED, IF CANADA'S EXAMPLE WERE TO BE FOLLOWED BY WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, THAT MIGHT LAY THE FOUNDATIONS OF A NEW CONFLICT BY UPSETTING THE BALANCE OF TERROR. UNILATERAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT IS NOT THE WAY TO PEACE, BUT, MORE LIKELY, A RECIPE FOR NEW CONFLICTS. THUS TRUDEAU'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GESTURE IS BOTH HOLLOW AND DANGEROUS."

4. THESE OBSERVATIONS NOTWITHSTANDING, MOST EDITORIAL COMMENT EXPRESSED OPINION THAT PM'S OVERALL DISARMAMENT INITIATIVE, PARTICULARLY THE "STRATEGY OF SUFFOCATION" WAS WORTHWHILE, EVEN IF CANADA WAS NOT A MAJOR ACTOR ON THE WORLD SCENE. (ACCORDING TO TRUDEAU, HIS "STRATEGY OF SUFFOCATION" IS DESIGNED TO "DEPRIVE THE ARMS RACE OF THE OXYGEN ON WHICH IT FEEDS" BY FREEZING THE AVAILABLE AMOUNT OF FISSIONABLE MATERIAL; BY PREVENTING ANY TECHNOLOGY THAT MAY BE DEVELOPED IN THE LABORATORY FROM BEING TESTED; AND BY REDUCING THE MONIES DEVOTED TO MILITARY EXPENDITURE.")

5. MOST CRITICAL COMMENTARY WAS ARTICLE ENTITLED "A PRETENTIOUS SPEECH" IN MAY 30 GLOBE AND MAIL BY NOTED JOURNALIST GEOFFRY STEVENS. ACCORDING TO STEVENS, TRUDEAU HAD NOTHING PARTICULARLY ORIGINAL TO SAY, ADDING, "...THIS INSPIRATIONAL PRECEDENT-SETTING EXERCISE IN SELF-DENIAL WOULD BE MORE IMPRESSIVE IF (A) HAVING NUCLEAR WEAPONS SERVED SOME USEFUL PURPOSE, OR (B) THERE EXISTED A PUBLIC DESIRE IN CANADA TO HAVE THEM." STEVENS CONCLUDED, "CANADA IS NOT MUCH OF A FORCE IN THE WORLD

THESE DAYS. WE HAVE ONLY OURSELVES TO BLAME."

6. TV COVERAGE WAS MILDLY FAVORABLE TO PM, WITH CBC PORTRAYING HIM AS THE MOST SENIOR LEADER IN NATO AND COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO HAVE HIS OWN VIEWS.

7. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, IN COMMONS OPPOSITION ATTEMPTED TO

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USE NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON HAPPENINGS TO EMBARRASS GOVERNMENT, PRESSING APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS. TESTIMONY OF CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF ADMIRAL FALLS BEFORE PARLIAMENTARY SUB-COMMITTEE, WHILE TRUDEAU WAS STILL IN WASHINGTON, TO THE EFFECT THAT NEUTRON BOMB WAS "LESS OMINOUS" THAN CONVENTIONAL NUCLEAR BOMB AND THAT CHANCES OF NUCLEAR WAR WOULD BE REDUCED IF ALLIANCE DEPLOYED NEUTRON BOMB, WERE JUMPED ON IN PARTICULAR FOR THIS PURPOSE. A GOVERNMENT CLARIFICATION WAS SUBSEQUENTLY MADE BY SPOKESMAN WHO SAID ADMIRAL FALLS' REMARKS WERE STRICTLY FROM A MILITARY-AS OPPOSED TO A POLITICAL-VIEWPOINT.

8. OPPOSITION LEADER JOE CLARK CHARGED TRUDEAU'S COMMENT THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS NOT LIKELY TO STEP UP THE COLD WAR WAS AT ODDS WITH THE EAST-WEST STUDY CONCLUSIONS

ENDORSED AT THE SUMMIT. DEPUTY PM MAC EACHEN DEFENDED TRUDEAU'S COMMENTS BUT ADDED THAT CANADA NONETHELESS VIEWED THE SOVIET UNION'S GROWTH IN MILITARY POWER AS A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"VERY SERIOUS" MATTER. MAC EACHEN REJECTED CRITICISM THAT CANADA HAD ADOPTED A HYPOCRITICAL STAND ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT WHILE RELYING ON U.S. MILITARY MIGHT. "EVEN THOUGH AT AN EARLY STAGE THIS COUNTRY HAD THE CAPACITY TO BECOME A NUCLEAR POWER, WE HAVE CHOSEN CONSISTENTLY ANOTHER ROUTE. IT SEEMS PASSING STRANGE THAT PARTICULAR DECISION SHOULD BE REGARDED AS HYPOCRISY," MAC EACHEN TOLD THE COMMONS.

9. COMMENT: TRUDEAU'S REMARKS IN WASHINGTON APPEAR TO BE IN CONFLICT WITH NATO'S EAST-WEST STUDY (IN WHICH CANADA COLLABORATED), A POINT NOTED BY JOURNALISTS AND OPPOSITION. NOTWITHSTANDING TRUDEAU'S EMPHASIS ON DISARMAMENT, WE NOTE CANADA ENDORSED THE NATO LONG TERM DEFENSE PROGRAM AND ON JUNE 1 TRUDEAU PUBLICLY REAFFIRMED HIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENTS TO THE NATO GOAL OF THREE PERCENT INCREASE IN DEFENSE SPENDING, AND A 12 PERCENT INCREASE IN CAPITAL OUTLAYS FOR DEFENSE. ENDERS

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